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IN THIS ISSUE

SASSANIAN COINS AND KINGS: VARAHRAN II, HORMIZD II. *Raymond J. Hebert*
BYZANTINE COINAGE: SYMBOLISM –PORTRAITURE. *Lincoln W. Higgie*
A CONSTANTIUS II DIE IDENTITY. *Michael R. Curry*

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CONTENTS

Notes on Sassanian Coins and Kings: Varahran II. 19
By RAYMOND J. HEBERT

Byzantine Coinage: A Study of Christian Symbolism and Portraiture. 21
By LINCOLN W. HIGGIE

Two Notes on Peculiar Local Currencies in the Islands of Thasos and Samothrace.
By H. F. TOZER

A SONG TO MITHRAS (Poem) 27
BY RUDYARD KIPLING

A Constantius II Die Identity
By MICHAEL R. CURRY 27

Notes on Sassanian Coins and Kings: Hormizd II.
By RAYMOND J. HEBERT 29

COVER COIN: Countermarked Turkish bronze coin from Asia Minor. Inscr. ΤΕΛ
Courtesy Lincoln W. Higgie.

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VARAHRAN II

by RAYMOND J. HEBERT

Varahran II was the son of Varahran I. He ruled from 276 A.D. to 293 A.D.

During his reign, Kartir received the rank of nobility, taking over the headship of religion and being made chief judge of the empire, as well as chief of the royal fire at Istakhr at the imperial shrine of Anahita. His honorary title was 'soul saviour of Varahran,' in other words, he served as the king's father-confessor. There was a continuation of the fierce persecution of non-Mazdean religions in Persia that had begun under his father during Varahran II's reign. Kartir played an important role in state affairs under Varahran II.

A new war with Rome broke out which coincided with a serious revolt in the eastern marches of the Empire. The king's brother, who held the important post of viceroy of Seistan, was urged on to seize the throne for himself by the Jushan prince who hoped to benefit from the affair. Barahran, rather than become involved on two fronts at the same time, concluded a peace with the Romans in which the latter regained their lost territories in northern Mesopotamis as well as hegempny over Armenia so that he could deal with the more urgent problem of his brother. In this he was successful.

Varahran struck many coin types. These can be distinguished from the 'normal' type in that they bear portraits of the royal family. The characteristic feature of his headdress is the winged crown worn by hum as in the Naqsh-i-Rustam and Sar Mashdad reliefs [see R. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia,* plate 93]. According to Gobl, this practice of having a family portrait was copied from the Romans. He has distinguished eight types: Type 1 – the

king's bust alone; Type II – the king and queen; Types III, IV and V – the king and his heir; Types VI, VII and VIII – the king, queen and heir. The illustration accompanying this article is of Type VIII. He feels that while the order is uncertain, there is no doubt that certain historical events of which we are unaware are portrayed here. He adds that Types VII and VIII fall in theor correct positions. In addition, they are the commonest of all the types after Type I.

The difference among Types III, IV and V is that in Type III the heir wears a tall cap, in Type IV he wears a horse's head headdress, and in Type V he wars a boar's head headdress. The difference among Types VI, VII and VIII is that in Type VI the queen wears an Eagle's head headdress, in Type VII she wears the boar's head headdress, and in Type VIII the headdresses are similar to Type VII, but there is the additional feature of the heir offering his parents a diadem (?) with a ribbon. A similar offering of a diadem by the god Ahura Mazda, who is represented in human shape to the founder of the Sassanian Empire, Ardashir I, is seen on a rock relief at Naqsh-i-Rustam [see Frye, *op. cit.* plate 79].

The marginal legend begins at 11:30 o'clock and reads counterclockwise giving the name of the king and his titles: MZDYSN BGY VRHRAN MLKAN MLKA AYRAN W ANYRAN MNCHTRY MN YZDAN ("Mazda-worshipping divine Varahran, King of Kings of Iran and non-Iran, of divine origin from the Gods"). This legend will be found in many abbreviated forms, depending upon the die.

There are two known reverses, Type I which occurs with all of the obverse types, and Type II which occurs with Obverse Type VIII. Type II is illustrated here. We see a fire altar on a two-stepped base, attended by the king on the left, wearing a globed diadem, and on the right by an heir, wearing the eagle head's headdress and offering his father a diadem (?). To the left and right of the flames respectively are the frohar and taurus symbols. To the left of the king is the legend NWRAZY ("the fire of"), and to the right of the heir, VRHR'N ("Varahran"). Reverse Type I shows the same type of fire altar, to the left and right of which are the king and the chief mobadh, each averted and holding a staff.

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Byzantine Coinage: A Study of Christian Symbolism and Portraiture

LINCOLN W. HIGGIE

The reign of Justinian I (527-565 A.D.) brought Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire to a peak they had never enjoyed before. Santa Sophia Basilica, with its immense dome, mosaics and opulent ornaments in gold and silver was but one of the lasting monuments of this great emperor. His law code was to remain a monument to legal wisdom and his vast empire an example to his successors. The cultural traditions of his court were to provide a repository for antique and Christian culture and art treasures, which later provided the examples and the influence for a rekindling of all fields of Western culture in Europe.

Unfortunately, great men like Justinian and his dynamic consort Theodora, were not always destined to sit upon the Byzantine throne. Justinus II, son of Justinian and Theodora, was but a weakling compared with his illustrious parents. He provides us with a new coin type in this series, seated next to his wife Sophia, who did most of the ruling while her husband was mentally incapacitated. Under such conditions the old traditions of intrigue and debasement at court soon took hold again and the emperor was dethroned by the usurper Tiberius Constantinus whose brief reign was one of blood and terror and caused a weakening of the empire in every respect. To be sure, law and order were restored again and a more gentle emperor was placed on the throne, but the power of the throne was still based to a great extent on assassinations and intrigues.

Wars of Survival and Conquest

Politically, the next few centuries after the death of Justinian were filled with intrigue, court scandals, bloody assassinations and wars for survival and conquest. Avars, Persians and Arabs menaced the empire and during the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. besieged Constantinople itself four times, both by land and sea. Each time the suburbs of Constantinople were ravaged, the city was saved, often by a trick of fate and sometimes, seemingly, by the hand of God. The Byzantine secret of Greek Fire, brought to them by a Greek named Callinicus and first used in A.D. 672, saved the day more than once. By catapulting Greek Fire from the city walls, the Byzantine defenders were not only able to destroy the fleets besieging their city, but were also able to destroy and scatter attacking land forces.

Religiously, the Byzantines were continually meddling in

church affairs to gain advantages and the church, in its turn, meddled in politics to gain its own ends. The sumptuous religious ceremonies in the churches inspired a religious fanaticism among the people which was not always without its dangers for the throne. Added to this was a clergy which wasted much of its time and strength in ridiculous religious quarrels. Disputes between the Byzantine Church and the Pope in Rome also caused religious and political dissension which led eventually to a break between the two churches which only recently has shown signs of reconciliation. The greatest of these religious disputes occupies a great deal of the eighth century in a controversy over religious images in the churches. In this controversy many of the greatest early Christian art works were destroyed by religious fanatics, making good Christian art from this period and the preceding centuries a rare find indeed.

Justinian I

Numismatically, the centuries following Justinian are of great interest. In the troubled times of struggling against heathen invaders, the growth of Christian symbolism on the coinage increases greatly. The cross appears as a central motif on the reverses and the emperors and their heirs or co-rulers flank the cross. Finally, during the reign of Justinian II (685-695) the emperor himself appears on the obverse of his gold solidi supporting the cross and a bust of Christ appears on the reverse. This numismatic milestone is indeed a gem of Byzantine art and is the first gold piece to bear a portrait of Christ. Far from common, this solidus shows us in the soft and rich beauty of gold, a rather stylized emperor in elaborate robes on the obverse, and the head of Christ, his right hand uplifted in blessing and a cross behind his head, on the reverse. How much it captures the religious and artistic feeling of its age and gives the numismatist lucky enough to own it a meaningful delight.

A numismatic development of Christian portraiture on the Byzantine coinage was not to follow for nearly three hundred years, however. After the reign of Justinian II the Iconoclastic Controversy ("The Quarrel of the Images") began. In this struggle of religious theory the parties were divided as to whether religious pictures and images should be allowed in the churches and for adornment. The iconoclastical emperors (beginning with Leo III Isaurus, 717-741 and continuing through Theophilus 829-842) condemned the veneration of holy images.

The Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 754 A.D. proclaimed this decision despite the objections of Pope Gregory II and this was the signal for a wave of destruction of works of art

of all kinds. Paintings, sculptures, mosaics and icons were destroyed by the thousands by religious fanatics. Even engraved jewels, gold enamel work and the few portrait coins of Justinian II were hunted down and destroyed. A new ecumenical council which met in 786 A.D. cancelled the edict abolishing images, but this was revoked again and a new wave of destruction was put into action by Leo V Armenus (813-820 A.D.)

The iconoclastical emperors were content to use a cross as the main Chistian symbol on their coins and after the Iconoclastic Controversy had subsided, we find Christ appearing on the gold solidi again. The first coin of this new period of Christian portraiture is a rare solidus of Michael III with his mother Theodora (852-856 A.D.). Michael also continued the motif of a bust of Christ on his solidi during his later reign alone.

With Basil I (869-879 A.D.) the new Macedonian Dynasty of Byzantine emperors ascended the throne in Constantinople. Under this family the empire regained much of its former brilliance in politics, trade and culture. The prosperity of the Macedonian Dynasty is witnessed by a large coinage of gold, making their solidi more available to the collector. Aside from building numerous palaces, churches, convents and monuments, this dynasty introduced a high quality of artistic workmanship on its coins. From the reign of Basil I onward we find many new types of Christian portraiture, several of which are repeated with interesting variations. Basil I and his son Constantine VII introduced the new motif of two rulers on the obverse holding a Greek cross between them and for the first time, an enthroned Christ on the reverse. Later rulers were to use both of these devices in varying ways on their gold, silver and bronze coins.

John I Zimisces

John I Zimisces (969-976 A.D.) issued the first bronze coins with a portrait of Christ on them. The reverse inscription in Byzantine Greek reads, "Jesus Christ, King of Kings." John I Zimisces also issued the first coin to portray the Virgin Mary on it. His first gold solidi portray the emperor on the obverse holding a Greek cross and the Virgin Mary placing the Byzantine crown on his head. The reverse portrays the now-familiar bust of Christ with a Bible in his left hand and the right hand upraised in blessing.

Constantine VII

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (1025-1028 A.D.) introduces for the first time the very interesting cup-shaped gold solidi which also depict a bust of Christ on the reverse. The exact reason for minting cup-shaped coins remains a puzzle to many numismatists today. The Byzantines were the only people to issue such pieces

and the tradition remained strong for several centuries. Nearly all of them in bronze, silver and gold portray a figure of Christ on the reverse and variations of a portrait of the emperor on the obverse. This writer can only hazard a guess as to why cup-shaped coins were minted by the Byzantine emperors. The form was far from practical as far as stacking or counting the coins was concerned. From an artistic point of view, however, we are immediately reminded of the mosaics and paintings in the likewise concave naves of the Byzantine churches. The concave feature on both sides gives a certain depth to the portraiture which is otherwise flat and lacking in depth. This then might be one solution to an otherwise puzzling problem of concave Byzantine coins. Very few of these concave pieces were ever minted in silver or billon and this was during the reign of Alexius I Comnenus (1081-1118 A.D.) who introduced and then promptly debased his silver concave pieces. Examples of these are quite rare today.

St. Michael on Coins

The last two coin types of the Byzantine Empire which deserve special attention from a Christian standpoint are those of Isaac II Angelus and Michael VII with Andronicus II. On the coinage of Isaac II Angelus (1185-1195) St. Michael is depicted for the first time on Byzantine coins. He is shown next to the emperor on the obverse helping him to hold up the cross. The significance of St. Michael, who drove Satan out of heaven, assisting the emperor, who was trying to drive out the encroaching Moslems and assist the Crusaders in their Holy Wars, is indeed great. If the emperor really needed a saint to aid him at a difficult time, St. Michael certainly was the right one to appeal to. This motif was to be repeated numerous times by later emperors who had reason to call on St. Michael for help.

Michael VIII and his son Andronicus II (1273-1281) asserted their claim to divine right to the throne by portraying themselves being crowned by Christ on the obverse of their coins and the reverse shows a seated Christ within the city walls of Constantinople.

The great interest in Christian symbolism and Christian portraiture on coinage in America today warrants a more thorough study of the Byzantine coins. They provide numerous examples of the finest Christian art to be found on any coins from this early Christian era and the Byzantine Empire provides a fertile field of study.

[Reprinted from *Numismatic News* May 25, 1964 through the courtesy of the author, Lincoln Higgie.]

Two Notes on Peculiar Local Currencies in the Islands of Thasos and Samothrace

H. F. TOZER

[Extracts from *The Islands of the Aegean* (Oxford 1890) pp.295-6,336-7]

[An] arrangement which is peculiar to Thasos, and which it is well for the traveller to be acquainted with before visiting the interior, is the system of local currency. Strange as it may seem, every village has its own peculiar coins, and these do not pass current outside the area of that village, except at Limena, which forms a general emporium for the island. In this respect the inhabitants have outdone even the ancient Greeks, among whom, though every city had its special coinage, the money that came from elsewhere was freely received. The pieces that are used are the copper, or rather brass, coins, which were current in Turkey until about ten years ago when they were called in by the government; on these each village imprints its private stamp before they can be put into circulation. The stamp in every case consists of four letters, placed within the limbs of a cross, two of which denote the name of the commune, the other two the dedication of the village church. Thus—to take one specimen out of several which I possess—the coins of the village of Vulgaro are marked with the letters E B K Θ, i.e. 'District of Vulgaro: Repose of the Virgin' (Ἐφορία Βουλγαρου Κοίμησις Θεοτόκου). This exclusive system is believed to be of ancient date. The disadvantages of it are apparent to everyone; what its advantages may be, I leave to political economists to determine.

The money that is in use in Samothrace is hardly less curious than that of Thasos. In default of small Turkish money, a paper currency has been established consisting of small squares of thin cardboard, on which are printed the name of the island with that of the principal church, and the value of the piece. Some of these notes, or tickets, have been sent from Constantinople, but others are made in Chora itself. The smallest, which are about an inch square, are equivalent to ten *paras* or a half-penny. I doubt whether the Austrian Tyrol in its most advanced days of paper currency ever quite equalled this.

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A SONG TO MITHRAS

Mithras, God of the Morning, our trumpets waken the Wall!
Rome is above the Nations, but Thou art over all!
Now as the names are answered, and the guards are marched away,
Mithras, also a soldier, give us strength for the day!

Mithras, God of the Noontide, the heather swims in the heat,
Our helmets scorch our foreheads; our sandals burn our feet.
Now in the ungirt hour; now ere we blink and drowse,
Mithras, also a soldier, keep us true to our vows!

Mithras, God of the Sunset, low on the Western main,
Thou descending immortal, immortal to rise again!
Now when the watch is ended, now when the wine is drawn,
Mithras, also a soldier, keep us pure till the dawn!

Mithras, God of the Midnight, here where the great bull dies,
Look on thy children in darkness. Oh, take our sacrifice!
Many roads Thou hast fashioned: all of them lead to the Light,
Mithras, also a soldier, teach us to die aright!

RUDYARD KIPLING

A CONSTANTIUS II DIE IDENTITY

by MICHAEL R. CURRY

The coin with which this article is concerned is a gold solidus of Constantius II (C.108) purchased earlier this year in Montreal. A complete description of the coin is as follows:

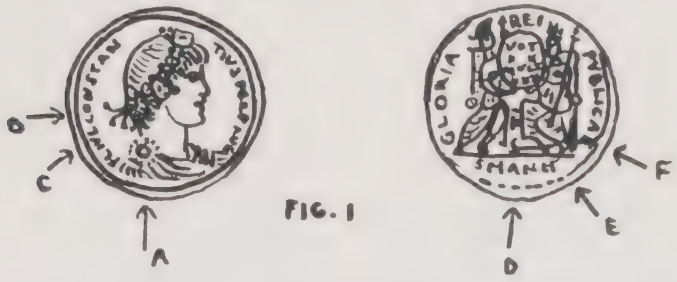

FIG. 1

Obverse: Laureate, cuirassed, draped and diademed bust of the Emperor facing right.
Legend: F L IVL CONSTAN - TIVS PERP AVG
Reverse: Roma and Constantinople seated holding between them a shield inscribed VOT XX MVLT XXX
Legend: GLORIA REI - PUBLICAE, SMANH in exergue.
Die Position:

Checking for similar examples in various dealers' lists and auction catalogues, I came across two coins which would appear to have been struck from the same obverse and reverse dies. The first of these coins is listed as No. 7 in the Fall/Winter 1965 fixed price list of Joel L. Malter. The second coin is listed as No. 2670 in Jacques Schulman's 7-10 May 1968 auction catalogue No. 247. Both coins are illustrated in the respective plates of the above mentioned listings.

Generally, all three coins exhibit similar style on both obverse and reverse sides. Specifically, the obverses of all three coins have a number of features that are identical. The first is a small indentation in the raised rim below the bust of the emperor (see A in Fig. 1). Secondly, the terminals on the end of the emperor's diadem equally correspond with the lettering in the legend behind his head and the curl of the hair on the back of his neck, on each of the coins (see B and C in Fig. 1). The position of the emperor's left epaulette in regard to the 'G' in AVG should be noted also.

The reverses of all three coins also have a number of common features. Firstly the segmentation of the rim below the mint mark (see D in Fig. 1). Secondly, a die crack from the 'H' in the mint mark to the field line (see E in Fig. 1). Finally, and this was the giveaway, a flaw in the raised rim that on first glance would

appear to be a "post minting" flaw in the coin, but is in fact a chip in the die that joins the top of the 'E' to the rim and has caused a die crack between the 'A' and the 'E' (see F in Fig. 1).

According to Mr. R.A.G. Carson, in a reply to a letter I wrote, "Die identity, particularly on the more restricted issues such as gold, are not unknown. . .". Having determined the existence of three coins struck from a single pair of dies, it would be interesting to try to determine the exact number of extant coins from this pari of dies, if the die flaws developed only at a later stage of striking, and if another die or dies were used in striking this particular "VOTA" issue from this mint. From this it might be possible to confirm or deny the previously estimated frequency of issues and/or the survival ratio.

Mattingly, in his *Imperial Vota* Part II, tentatively assigns Constantius II's VOT XX MULT XXX a date of 347 A.D. Yet, both D. R. Sear in *Roman Coins and Their Values* and Carson, Hill and Kent in *Late Roman Bronze Coinage* list a group of pre-reform bronzes from Alexandria bearing the legend VOT XX MVLT XX. In view of the fact that this coinage reform took place in 346 A.D. these pieces must therefore have been struck either in 346 A.D. or earlier. Carson, Hill and Kent assign this issue a date range of 341-346 A.D.

This apparent anomaly only serves to prove the complexities involved in the coinage of this period. Problems of this sort must needs be left up to the skills of the professional numismatist whol will be able to correlate all the historical and numismatic evidence involved. Suffice it to say that in this particular case, the system of taking and fulfilling vows was vastly altered and was further influenced by a number of known and unknown historical events, eg. the granting of the Imperium. These events are so varied and numerous that the theories proposed will be equally so!

Finally, I would appreciate hearing from any persons possessing a coin of this particular vota issue from Antioch, whether or not from the same dies.

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HORMIZD II

by RAYMOND J. Hebert

The reign of Hormizd II was not a noteworthy one. He ruled from 302 A.D. to 309 A.D. Information about him is scanty. Al? we know is that he was a good ruler and tried to live in peace with his neighbors. In order to do this and to contain the inroads of the Kushans, he married[one of their princesses as a pledge of his friendly intentions toward her family. It was one of the most celebrated events of this period.

His coins are characterized by a headdress in the form of an eagle dropping a pomegranate from its beak. There are three reverses and one obverse. The obverse depicts the bust of the king to the right with a short curly beard, wearing a headdress of an eagle which carries a pomegranate in its beak. According to Gobl, these wings belong to the god Verethragna, the Iranian Hercules. They are also to be seen on the crown of Varahran II, as well as many of Hormizd's successors. The marginal legend which begins at 11:30 o'clock gives the name and titles of the king: MZDYSN BGY AWHRMZDY MLKAN MLKA AYRAN MNWCHTRY MN YZDAN ("Mazda-worshipping divine Hormizd, King of kings of

Iran, of divine origin from the gods.") It should be noted that this is the full form of the legend and that it occurs in shortened form on many of his coins.

There are three reverse types: Type I–the bust of the god Ahuramazda turned to the left. This is the most common type and can be seen in the illustration of coin No. 1. Type II – the bust is turned to the right. Type III – the bust is facing. This type can be seen in the illustration of coin No. 2. Coin No. 1 came from Afghanistan and coin No. 2 from Iran. Gobl states that Type III is "not known for certain." The figures are the king to the left of the altar and the mobadh to the right of the altar. As usual, there are the words 'the fire of' and 'Hormizd.' It is not uncommon to find on the shaft of the altar various points, or, rarely, the word RDY ("chief, master, head") referring to the god Ahuramazda in the flames.

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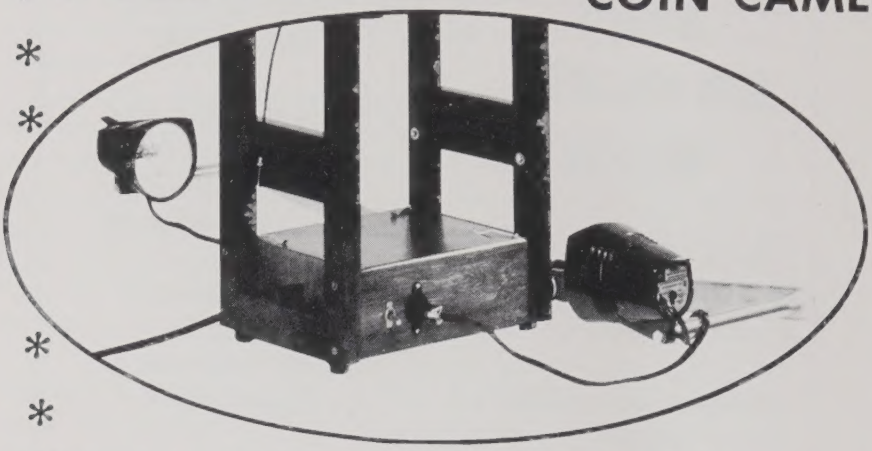

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